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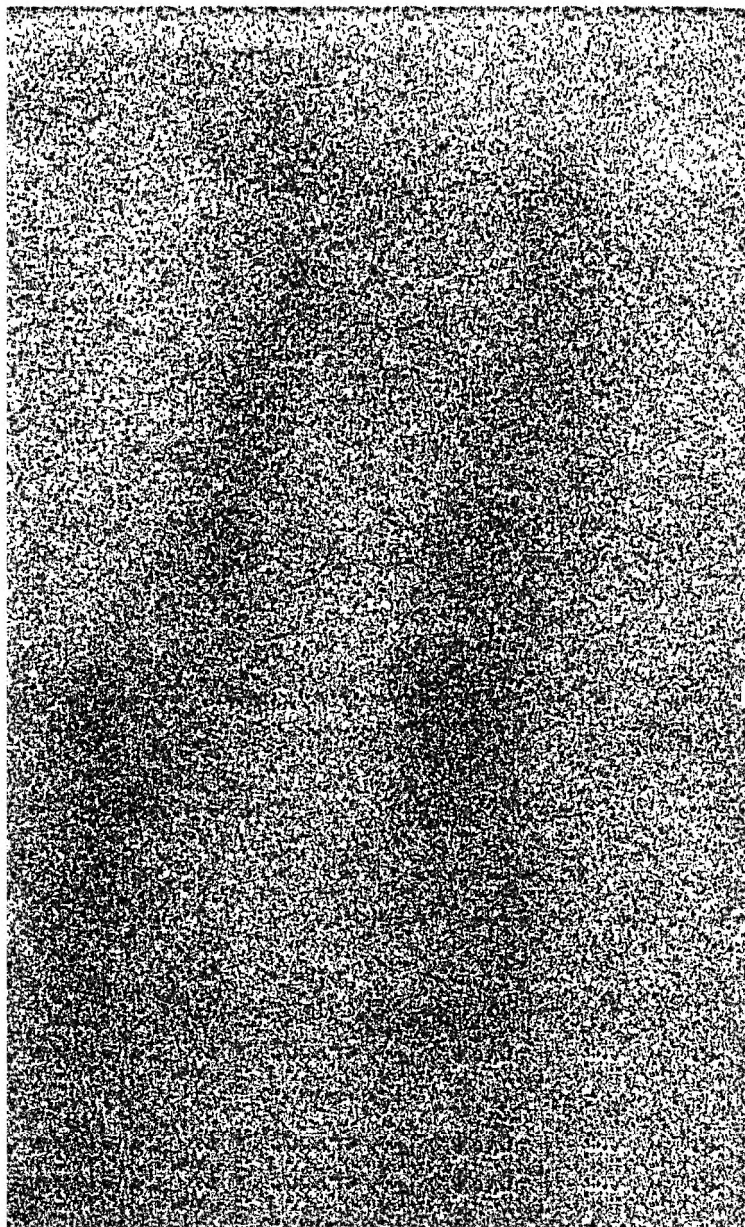
1893 - 1943

# Golden Jubilee



Sacred Heart Church  
Canmore, Alberta

Saskatchewan  
Historical Society





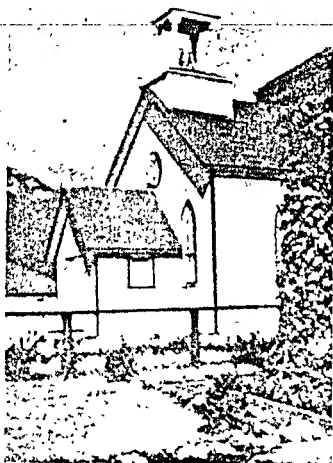
**MOST REV. FRANCIS P. CARROLL, D.D.**  
The Present Bishop of Calgary







Sunday, November 19th, 1893, was the occasion of the Blessing and opening of the Sacred Heart Church, at Canmore. In commemoration of this event this little booklet is dedicated.



SACRED HEART CHURCH  
Canmore

### SOME EARLY HISTORY OF THE VALLEY.



THE latter part of the 19th century witnessed the first coming of the white man to the wild unknown country of the Blackfoot and Stony Indians in the foothills and the Rocky Mountains. In the year 1832 the Hudson's Bay Company had built a station at Bow Fort, but had abandoned it shortly afterwards due to the hostility of the Indians. However, nothing stood in the way of the Missionaries who penetrated the district as early as 1840. Explorers and surveyors, carrying on their difficult work, were also in the territory. The

Palliser expedition, under instructions to seek a pass through the mountains, sent Dr. Hector and Mr. Burgeau. In 1858 Burgeau visited and gave names to Pigeon, Grotto, and Wind Mountains, and the Fairholme Range. Before them, in the year 1845, Rev. Father Plerre Jean deSmet, S.J., in the course of his long and famous journey in Canada, came in to the valley of the Bow by what is known as White-man's Pass. He spent some time with the Assiniboines of the Mountains on his way to meet the Chief of the Blackfeet. In the immediate vicinity of End Mountain he performed what were perhaps the first Baptisms in Calgary Diocese when he brought six Indian children and one old man into the Church. The old man died a few days later and was given a full Christian burial there in the camp. Then again these vast regions were forgotten or avoided, and saw only a few explorers and the missionary work of the Revs. Messrs. McDougall, of the Methodist Church, and the founding of the Morley Mission.

The invasion, when it did come, was fast and furious. In 1883 the railroad, on its Westward push, had reached Calgary, and an army of workers started for the foothills. Surveyors, bridge-builders, construction gangs, prospectors, all were headed towards the mighty barrier of the mountains. With them came the forces of law and order, the Royal North West Mounted Police. In the same year they established themselves near Policeman's Creek, in Canmore. To minister to men's souls and to keep spiritual order, came the Chaplains of the Road, the zealous men stationed at the Catholic Mission in Calgary. The first of these Ambassadors of Christ was the Rev. Edmund Claude, O.M.I, who arrived in Canmore, September 22nd, 1883.

## A FULL TEN YEARS

In the wake of the Westward moving railroad line came a period of intense activity and development. One of the divisional points was established and given the name of Canmore by the Company officials. This is a Gaelic word meaning Big Head, and may refer to one of the mountains, or more probably, the town was named after the Scottish King, Malcolm Canmore, 1024-1050, who was the husband of St. Margaret of Scotland. Coal was discovered at this time and its mining occupied the attention of both the C.P.R. and the settlers. The Canadian Anthracite Company was formed in 1891, and the first bridge over the Bow River was constructed in 1892. Keeping pace with this new life and activity, were numerous Priests who followed Father Cloude as Chaplains of the Line. Rev. Father Fay, a native of Edinburgh, Scotland, attended the construction and mining camps from Calgary to Fort Moody in 1884 and 1885, and later became the first parish priest of Vancouver. Rev. Leon Doucet visited Canmore in 1887 the first Sunday of every month, while Fr. Coccola came from Kamloops for the Italians. Fathers Folsy and Moise Blais had charge of the stations from Calgary to Donald. A permanent Church was erected in Banff and blessed by Fr. Leduc in 1888. Bishop Grandin, of St. Albert, in whose Diocese the new district was located, paid a visit, accompanied by his Vicar-General, Father Lacombe, and offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in Canmore the first of July, 1889. Midnight Mass was offered Christmas of the same year. Rev. Benjamin Desroches was in charge until 1892 when he gave place to Rev. Walter Comire, the builder of the church in Canmore.



REV. FR. WALTER COMIRE,  
O.M.I.

### A CHURCH IN CANMORE

While engaged in their arduous work, the Missionaries said Mass wherever they could. In Canmore they were given the use of Mr. Conroy's Hotel and the home of the Laurendeau family for Divine Worship and lodgings. On September 20th, 1893, Fr. Comire, accompanied by two Oblate lay brothers, Bowes and Brochart, began the construction of the Sacred Heart Church. Catholics of the town contributed very generously of their resources and labour, and the new building was completed and free of debt by the 21st of October. The archives of the Oblate Fathers contain the following account of the opening. "The blessing took place Sunday, November 19th, by Father Lestanc, assisted by Fr. Comire. There was High Mass with beautiful music and many people present. In the evening there was a



second reunion of parishioners, proud of their charming little church." A few months later Bishop Grandin himself came and blessed the new bell. Father Comire remained in charge till June, 1896, when he was transferred to Onion Lake. All his life since, this venerable priest has been engaged in Indian work. Still active and zealous, he recalls the wonderful help given him and the Brothers in the early days by the devout people of Canmore and district. A census taken at the time showed Canmore to have 90 Catholics; Banff, 50; Anthracite, 20; Cochrane, 80. Father Comire also built the church in Cochrane which was blessed on November 24th, 1895.

An instance of the good will existing at the time is the story of an undertaking to raise funds for church furnishings. Father Naessens brought his boys' band from the Indian school at Dunbow for a concert. As there was no hall in town, the use of the Presbyterian Church was generously offered and accepted for this entertainment on Sunday evening.

Father Fouquet came to the district in 1896. Meanwhile the Polish speaking Catholics becoming rather numerous, Bishop Grandin secured the help of two brothers, Revs. Albert and William Kulawy who began visitation in the district. About this time also Rev. Fr. Lemarchmand, of Calgary, and his curate, Fr. Remas, bought a four room house in Canmore for the use of the Missionary at the cost of \$40. Sermons were given then in English, French, Italian, and Polish. Rev. Louis Culerier attended the missions for a while and was succeeded by Rev. Jules Seltmann, O.M.I., of Breslau, Germany, who took up residence in Cochrane and then in Banff in May, 1905. With the first resident priest in the district a new and more fervent phase of Catholic life was inaugurated in the Valley.



ST. BERNARD'S CHURCH  
Exshaw

#### ADDITIONAL MISSIONS

The first Mass in the newly formed town of Bankhead was offered January 29th, 1905, in a large mine hall. This town, according to the Calgary Herald of the time, boasted of a population of 700 workmen. A church was erected there a few years later; but with the abandonment of the town, was moved to Forest Lawn, where it serves the people of that suburb of Calgary.

Still another Valley settlement came into existence in 1906 and was named Exshaw. Father Seltmann offered the first Mass there on October 6th, 1906. Plans were formed to erect a small church; in the meantime Mass was said in the school house. Construction was begun in March of the next year on property donated by the Canada Cement Company. Several interruptions prevented completion which was however, reached in July, only to encounter the greatest interruption. The new chapel was blown down in a violent wind storm. Once more it was erected, and, on August 18th, the first Mass was offered in it. A month later, Sept. 18, 1907, Bishop Legal solemnly dedicated it to St. Bernard.

In spite of a heavy snowstorm and extremely cold weather, all the parishioners attended the dedication ceremonies and the blessing of the bell which took place on the same day. Father Seltmann was transferred shortly afterwards to Spring Lake, Sask. He left the Valley on November 1st, 1907.

#### UP TO THE PRESENT

In the meantime the town of Canmore had grown in size and population. New houses, stores and hotels were erected. From the first eating place of Bill Coffie, built in 1883, and the Mountain House Hotel of Mr. Conroy, the town now had four hotels--The Pulman, The Waverly, The Canmore; and the Oskaloosa. It also boasted of Chenier and Laurendeau's store, the Presbyterian Church built in 1892 in the tenure of Rev. C. W. Gordon, known to the literary world as Ralph Connor, the Church of England, and a Company store. Among the clergy who followed Father Seltmann were Rev. H. Hermes and Rev. A. Sylla who took up residence in Canmore in October of 1908. This marks the beginning of a separate parish. Fr. Sylla built a rectory with funds provided by the Oblate Community in the fall of 1909. He completed the Bankhead church and was succeeded by Fr. Hermes in 1917. The first Diocesan priest in charge was Rev. John Osborne who came in 1922. Many other priests visited the parish in those years to help with preaching and hearing Confessions in languages other than English. Father Osborne was followed by Rev N. Burrell for a year then in turn by Fathers Stefanski, Lebel, Leaver, and the present incumbent, Rev. B. A. Holland, in July 1940.

## THE SISTERS OF ST. MARTHA

Upon the invitation of Most Rev. P. J. Monahan, Bishop of Calgary, and Rev. Fr. Stefanski, the Sisters of St. Martha of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, opened a Convent in 1933 with Sister M. Anthony as Superior, and Sister Francis Teresa as her assistant. The Sisters came to engage in the Spiritual and Corporal works of mercy, to teach Religion, visit the sick, and help in the parish work. The Canmore establishment was the first Social Service Centre in charge of their Congregation in Canada. They were housed in the rectory, while the pastor had built the small chalet still used as the residence of the priest. Much hardship of all kinds was endured at the start, but their zeal and fervour overcame all difficulties, and endeared them and their successors to every one in the district. In 1937 the Diocese provided them with a convent which was named Mount Carmel. Sister Thomas Aquinas was the next Superior, followed by the present Superior, Sister John de la Salle. Their presence and work has contributed much to the spiritual life and progress of the parish, as well as to its material well-being.



Thus is brought to a close the first fifty years in the life of the church in Canmore and the Bow Valley. We of today celebrate this anniversary with the hope that God will reward those Priests, Brothers, Sisters and lay men and women who have contributed so much towards the spread of the Kingdom of God. We offer a special tribute and gratitude to the Oblate Fathers who have laboured so fruitfully in this territory, and to the Diocesan clergy who have followed in their footsteps and carried on the work so nobly and labouriously begun half a century ago in the Valley of the Bow and in the shadow of the mighty Rockies.



**BISHOP V. GRANDIN**  
Oblate of Mary Immaculate  
First Bishop of St. Albert, Alberta,  
whose saintly death occurred  
on June 3rd, 1902